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Security Council
Fifty-ninth year

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5000th meeting
Wednesday, 30 June 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Baja	(Philippines)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Cheng Jingye
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the head of the Security Council mission to West Africa

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

04-40859 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the head of the Security Council mission to West Africa

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Sir Emyr Jones Parry, head of the Security Council mission to West Africa.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and of the Secretariat who took part in the mission to West Africa.

I would like now to give the floor to Sir Emyr Jones Parry, head of the Security Council mission to West Africa.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry: In September 2005, the United Nations has an important rendezvous with the Millennium Declaration, when a summit of the General Assembly will review progress in implementing the commitments we took on in 2000. The Millennium Development Goals can be achieved in most of Asia and Latin America, but we already know that Africa is way off track, threatening us with an overall failure in 2015 if we do not start making real breakthroughs now. Many African leaders have stepped up to the challenge in establishing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

It is in Africa that honouring our commitments will affect most lives, and where failing to honour them will cause the most despair. We have a moral duty and a practical self-interest in helping their efforts to build a prosperous and stable continent. Without security in Africa, there will be no prosperity and stability. In the Security Council, we spend some 50 per cent to 60 per cent of our time on Africa. The new threat of weapons of mass destruction and terror always risks being spread where instability and conflict reign. Yet recent peace agreements offer millions of Africans the chance of a fresh start, and through structures like the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Africans are building their own peacekeeping capacities. It is the responsibility of the Council to give them our fullest support.

Why West Africa? Because it is a region of key interest where the United Nations is investing heavily, where there is much promise, where there are vibrant societies, where there is rich potential and yet where there are fragile States that often lack infrastructure and absorptive capacities. Problems are shared, and often have contagious effects on neighbours. ECOWAS has demonstrated political and military leadership in the region and is striving today for increased economic cooperation, as a contribution to greater prosperity.

Hence the simple aims of the mission: to identify a coherent strategy for United Nations intervention across the spectrum; to encourage and support the efforts of ECOWAS; to identify how to build on current cooperation among United Nations missions and the United Nations bodies in the subregion; and to determine how we should assess overall progress towards the Council's objectives to further peace and regional security. All of those aims are set out in greater detail in the letter which you, Mr. President, sent to the Secretary-General on 15 June (S/2004/491).

During the visit, our focus was on underscoring the regional aspects as we visited individual countries and debated issues with their leaders.

Regional cooperation can clearly be a major catalyst for economic growth. Yet what we see time and time again is that legitimate free movement is inhibited by restrictions and by racketeers. Yet porous borders facilitate trafficking in arms, persons and illicit items in general. It is also clear that tackling problems successfully in one country sometimes only displaces the problem to a neighbour. Fighters who are unable to operate in one country and who have no apparent allegiance just move next door. A graphic analogy was used on one occasion: if you have got a cockroach in one room, there is no point in just fumigating the room. The only way to get rid of the cockroaches is to

fumigate the house. That is a simple analogy as to why a regional approach is needed.

The problem of refugees is affecting the whole region. Guinea, for example, has borne the burden of Sierra Leonean and Liberian exiles.

We went beyond the simple issues. We recognized that the horizontal aspects of concern to the Council do not respect national borders. Throughout the visit we tried to address the themes of human rights; governance; child soldiers; peace-building; small arms proliferation; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the role of women; poverty; HIV/AIDS; elections; and so forth. There is a raft of such issues. But they have common themes affecting all the countries and the region as a whole.

We were also keen to meet representatives of civil society and the non-governmental organizations working in the field. The briefing that we were given at the Arria-style meeting beforehand proved very useful.

Of course, the raison d'être of the Security Council is international peace and security. Without security and peace, there can be no sustainable development. But without development, stability and security become even more difficult. So we come to the self-evident truth: security and development tend to be interdependent. As well as the broader interest, we therefore looked at the situation in individual countries, discussed the key issues with ministers and demonstrated our support for the United Nations missions active in the region and for the work of the funds and specialized agencies.

We visited seven countries in eight days. It was right to start in Ghana, which holds the current chairmanship of ECOWAS. While there we also met the ECOWAS secretariat. We moved on successively to Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea (Conakry). We were also briefed in Dakar by Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

The formal written report should be circulated later this week — initially in English, I think, with translations to follow. Meanwhile, I would like to share some quick impressions of the discussion in the individual capitals.

In Accra, Mr. Chambas, Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, set out the agenda for the work of ECOWAS. Frankly, it is impressive and fits well with the Council's priorities. It is dominated by a political and military role, with the intention now being to prepare a standby force of 6,500. ECOWAS throughout is playing a constructive role in the region, especially through the Ghanaian-Nigerian efforts to facilitate dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire. Economic aspects are less advanced, but they offer considerable potential.

The visit to Abidjan was timely and important. We expressed concern at the present political impasse and the non-functioning of the Government, and we delivered tough messages to all the parties, to the Government, to President Gbagbo, to parliamentarians and to civil society. We emphasized the cardinal importance of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and brought together its signatories for the first time since that Agreement was signed. We were given commitments, and it is our view that we should monitor them carefully and hold accountable anyone who is obstructive. The goal is clear: it is to proceed peacefully to elections in 2005 based on Linas-Marcoussis.

In Monrovia, Liberia — a country starting afresh and picking itself up from the devastation wreaked by Taylor for so long — we were impressed by the commitment of Chairman Bryant and his team and by the improved security situation, thanks to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). But progress is clearly going to be a big challenge. In stressing the need to build peace and institutions, we emphasized that there could be no impunity for those who faced indictment.

We spent 24 hours in Freetown — but I would like to say that our first thoughts today must be sympathy for the families of those who perished in yesterday's tragic helicopter accident, individuals who were dedicating themselves to peace and to rebuilding Sierra Leone, and our deepest sympathy must go to the Government of Pakistan.

In Sierra Leone, there has been a lot of progress. The military and police forces are gradually strengthening, and we seem on course to drawn down the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) as previously agreed by the Council. But getting Sierra Leone to point where it is capable of managing its own security and defence is going to be only a first challenge. The State is fragile, and building its institutions, particularly developing a prosperous

economy, one which at the moment is heavily dependent on the presence of the international community, is going to be very difficult.

In Abuja, we had an outstanding meeting with President Obasanjo and Foreign Minister Adenji. We shared impressions on regional aspects and on the role of ECOWAS. But we were also able to discuss the positive developments in the Sudan and the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. We are encouraged by President Obasanjo's commitment and his belief in the role that the African Union could play.

The President also gave us a magisterial presentation on the importance of NEPAD. He emphasized the importance of the international community's supporting the initiative through a much increased flow of resources, improved trade access and debt relief. But he also set out a clear context of development and security and stressed the need for a partnership covering conflict, security, governance, democracy and economic development. He also briefed us on the useful progress made in the 25 June meeting, which he chaired between Presidents Kabila and Kagame.

We found Guinea-Bissau evidently the poorest country which we visited, yet we were told that the conditions were visibly better than when our colleagues visited last year. We welcomed there the presence of Ambassador Kumalo and of two colleagues from the Economic and Social Council, who joined us to underline the strength of United Nations support as a whole for Guinea-Bissau.

The country is starting from the bottom, having emerged from turmoil, and the Government has been in office only for some 50 days. But there were encouraging signs, with a President and a Government committed to progress. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is likely to agree a special post-conflict programme in September, so we encourage the positive trends and underline to the military the importance of political control and the need for substantial restructuring and retirement within the military establishment.

The challenge for the United Nations system and for Guinea-Bissau's development partners will be to support these positive trends and facilitate an absorptive capacity and administrative infrastructure, both of which are, at the moment, cruelly lacking.

In Conakry, we spent an hour with President Conté and discussed regional issues. The President welcomed the dialogue, noted that Guinea had suffered most from regional conflict, and expressed his personal commitment to working for peace.

Throughout the visit, we were very impressed by the dedication of United Nations peacekeepers and by the United Nations country teams. We were able to explore a range of issues with the different Special Representatives. Coordination is in place to deliver effective, coherent policies worked out in conjunction with host Governments. The Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have a key role in leadership and direction and also in presenting the United Nations to the host country. What is vital, it seems to us, is that the United Nations be seen to be supporting policies of which the Government has ownership and that it should be perceived as a friend, as an enabler, and that at the same time that it should do this without fostering permanent dependency. We felt that the representatives were achieving those goals.

I should like to thank my colleagues for their contributions and for the tireless energy which they displayed throughout a long mission, and our particular thanks are due to the Secretariat.

If I may, I should now like to offer some conclusions, starting with a statement of the blindingly obvious: the United Nations and the international community have to stay the course in West Africa. This will require a sustained effort, but we cannot afford to give up anywhere. We cannot afford the risk of failing States, or even failure in parts of individual States.

But building peace, establishing institutions, developing absorptive capacities, putting in place the rule of law and holding free and fair elections are much more difficult than trying to stop a conflict. The risk of slipping back into conflict is always greater in the first two years or so after the end of conflict, so vigilance and sustained commitment by the United Nations and its entire family, by the international financial institutions, by ECOWAS and all the other elements of the international community, will, in our view, remain essential.

But to get there, economic development will also be essential. It is essential to underpin, support and harness the assets and economic potential of the region. Some continuing degree of dependency culture is natural and inevitable, but sovereign Governments

must exercise control and assume their responsibilities quickly, so that sustainable development and peace go hand in hand and are secured.

It seems to us that the regional approach is absolutely essential, for the reasons I have tried to set out. The countries and the different issues are so intertwined that regional success is a prerequisite for stability in one country. Therefore it also makes sense for us to support those countries in the region which demonstrate commitment to good governance and to human rights. Sometimes they are overlooked in our concentration on the problem cases. It was suggested to us that, if there is another mission next year that we ought to go and see more of the successful countries, those not in conflict.

We should not be too shy in taking action to avert conflict. If the warning signs are there, we should be prepared to act, and be prepared to act sooner. The Mixed Commission on Bakassi, for example, chaired by Special Representative Ould-Abdallah, is a good example of conflict prevention and of better value and more effective use of funding in the long run than peacekeeping.

Within the region, the Special Representatives meet regularly, and it is important that the regional synergies of individual peacekeeping operations are better developed. But what we have to remember is that the peacekeeping operations are very tightly resourced indeed, with no reserves and little flexibility. They are very much operating at the maximum of what is possible.

More people are killed by small arms in Africa than by any another type of weapon. The arms trade causes instability. The present moratorium needs to evolve into a more aggressive attack on all aspects of this trade, something which I hope the Council can come back to soon.

By necessity, most of our United Nations effort is targeted at post-conflict situations. But clearly more effective conflict-prevention policies are needed, and that is not only in West Africa. Again, that is something which I hope the Council could address substantively, and soon.

In all this, we were struck that ECOWAS is a force for good, and we should look to see how we can give it further support.

Are there imaginative ways in which we can help with the training and even the funding of a standby force? It seems to me that we need a better definition of the relationship between United Nations peacekeeping and regional efforts. Perhaps the High-Level Panel will help us on that. Certainly, the special event which the incoming Romanian presidency intends to hold on 20 July to look at the relationship with regional organizations is a step in that direction.

Development, security and stability are essential if peace is to endure in West Africa. That will demand the sustained effort of the international community as a whole and all the interventions that we can bring to bear. By that, of course, I do not mean military intervention; I am talking about the range of peaceful support which can be given to Governments.

Sometimes in this city, perhaps in this country, some dispute the role and the relevance of the United Nations. Those of us who last week saw first-hand the work of the United Nations in West Africa and who now have a reinforced impression of the problems which the United Nations is tackling there have no doubts about the primary importance of the United Nations and of its work in the field. It is a simple truth, it seems to me, that we need to tackle these problems in West Africa if only because, if neglected, they could become problems for all of us.

That is my contribution, but the mission was very much a team effort. If I may, Mr. President, I would like to ask you to invite Ambassador De La Sablière and Ambassador Gaspar Martins to add their personal impressions, too.

The President: I thank Ambassador Jones Parry for his briefing.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I have little to add to the briefing by Ambassador Jones Parry, whom I wish to commend for the brilliant way he led the mission.

Since I have been invited to take the floor, I shall simply underline a few points, most of which have already been raised. First, with respect to Security Council missions, it is not easy for us to organize them due to our schedules. However, based on my experience, having now participated in three of them, I think they are very useful, first of all, because they promote better understanding of the Security Council's concerns and policies as defined in the Council's

resolutions and statements. I think that referring to and explaining those texts to concerned parties is a positive contribution.

Secondly, I think the missions are useful for communicating messages on the implementation of those texts: whether we are satisfied, or, on the contrary, concerned.

And finally, I believe that the missions — perhaps not the least of their contributions — also considerably enrich the Council, because in 10 days one can acquire a great deal of information and get a better idea of the situation on the ground. I think that, following a mission, all of us are greatly enriched. With that in mind, we are considering a mission to Central Africa in the autumn. This has already been agreed upon in principle.

With respect to the Council's relationship with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which my colleague Ambassador Jones Parry just referred to, I was struck by the similarity of our analyses and the complementarity of our actions. I think the Council has been right to cultivate that relationship; we should continue to do so because our approaches are fully complementary.

With respect to the regional approach, I shall limit myself to noting that I am especially concerned by the problem of the circulation of small arms and former combatants. Different countries are not moving towards the settlement of their crises at the same pace. Take, for example, Sierra Leone, which has just emerged from crisis. One of the concerns of the Sierra Leonean authorities is that the process of settling the conflict in the country should not be adversely affected by transfers of weapons and combatants who might come into Sierra Leone. It is a fact that the situation there is not developing at the same pace, and there is therefore a special concern at the regional level to try to better deal with the problem of small arms and the movement of former combatants. An arms moratorium exists, but there is no doubt it is insufficient because weapons are still in circulation. I do not know in what framework, but the Security Council should, in cooperation with ECOWAS, return to this issue. It is a difficult issue because it is not easy to be effective in this area. But I think that it is necessary to return to it, as Ambassador Jones Parry suggested.

I shall comment only briefly on individual situations. The report to be issued discusses them in detail and makes recommendations. I would simply say that on Côte d'Ivoire there are some encouraging signs, but I think we have all come back rather concerned. The Security Council has delivered its messages, which are contained in its resolutions and statements. I think the Council has done that clearly and firmly. It must now follow the situation closely. Those who hinder implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement or continue to attack the United Nations should bear their responsibility, as the Security Council stated in its presidential statement of 29 May 2004 (S/PRST/2004/17).

We shall follow the situation closely. Interesting commitments have been made. We should monitor them closely. Those commitments relate to the restoration of the normal functioning of the Government and to adopting by 28 July three texts provided for in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement: laws on nationality, property and the electoral commission. In the presence of the President of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister, President Gbagbo said that if those laws were not adopted by 28 July, a special session would be held in August to do so. We shall follow that situation very closely. Commitments were made also regarding the possible establishment of a United Nations radio station and the signing of a headquarters agreement.

In Liberia, we saw an increase in the strength of United Nations force in a country which has emerged from a war that completely destroyed it. We can see the vastness of the task. But as for me, what I saw rather encouraged me.

In Sierra Leone, the real problem is the exit problem and what will happen after the United Nations force leaves. It should not destabilize or jeopardize Sierra Leone. Clearly, the problem is economic in nature. Thus, economic growth — a current goal — which is due to the current United Nations presence, should not be lost.

With respect to Guinea-Bissau, substantial efforts are being made. Those efforts should continue, with the assistance of the international community. In that connection, the fact that in this specific case, we conducted a mission together with our colleagues from the Economic and Social Council, including Ambassador Kumalo, has been very useful, and we were able to work together in that country. I think that in Burundi we could continue the experiment.

I, too, should like to conclude by thanking the Secretariat for all its efforts and for having made the mission possible. It was quite a difficult mission, because we visited many countries in only a few days.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): The mission was successful, and one of the main reasons is that we had very good leadership in the person of Ambassador Jones Parry. The mission was timely; we visited countries where action was needed to break deadlocks and to make peacekeeping or peace-building situations more effective. We went to deliver messages from the Security Council, which can be accomplished either through our presidential statements or through direct contacts with the main stakeholders — particularly with the peoples of these countries. That is because peacekeeping and peace-building must be carried out principally by the main actors, the peoples of the countries that we visited. I think we managed to deliver those messages.

In the case of Côte d'Ivoire — where the peacekeeping operation seemed to be more endangered by the deadlock that persisted with the continuing lack of dialogue between the Government of President Gbagbo and his opposition — I think I can say that the meeting we held with all the stakeholders with whom it was possible to meet during a day-and-a-half-long mission also attained that objective. Right now, some results are beginning to emerge in Côte d'Ivoire. Thanks to the messages and to the firmness with which they were delivered, the deadlock has been broken and United Nations Radio — which is very much needed to pass on United Nations messages to the people of Côte d'Ivoire — already seems to be back on the airwaves since we left Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, the dialogue between President Gbagbo and his opposition seems to be under way in Abidjan, which means that our mission seems to have produced the results we had intended: making the peacekeeping effort and our investment in peace effective and making our results tangible. That can be accomplished only through the firmness we demonstrated in delivering the messages.

We went to West Africa to say that we needed a different environment throughout the region. The messages that were delivered — whether they concerned child soldiers or the trafficking in small arms and light weapons — were communicated in a way that enabled us to express clearly the Council's concerns about those problems.

We had the opportunity to meet with the leaders of the peacekeeping operations in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. That was one of our key concerns, since peacekeeping can be more seriously affected in those two countries by the lack of progress in the first country we visited, Côte d'Ivoire. The processes now under way in both Sierra Leone and Liberia — particularly the process of disarming former combatants — seem quite well established. We hope that we have sent the correct messages and that we can continue to assess progress in the future when we look at specific mandates.

There is a situation that is of some concern to us: in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) seems to be more or less ending its mandate. We need to seriously consider this situation, where the objectives that we defined have not yet been fully attained. I am sure that it will be reviewed properly in the Council at the appropriate time. The current situation requires more peace-building in order to complete the peacekeeping operation. Unless that is handled properly, we may face a situation that we could have avoided. But such a situation can still be avoided.

The country we left with more hopes is Guinea-Bissau. The fact that, in a happy coincidence, the Council mission visited Guinea-Bissau at the same time as the Economic and Social Council served to reinforce a message that peacekeeping and peace-building, or country-building, go together. In Guinea-Bissau, there has been very clear progress, judging from the situation we saw there last year. That progress can be reinforced only if there is commitment by the international community; here, the way must be pointed out by the Council.

It was also fortunate that, during the mission's stay in Guinea-Bissau, a mission of the International Monetary Fund was reviewing the situation in the country. The assessment — which was shared with members of the Council — is that there is a clear effort aimed at improving the governance of the country, and that it is being taken seriously by the newly elected Government. We had meetings with members of civil society; with parliamentarians, particularly the President of Parliament; and with the main political parties. There is cohesion on what needs to be done. In particular, there is hope that the Council, representing the international community, will be prepared to reward Guinea-Bissau if there is constancy and

perseverance in attaining the objectives that have been defined.

Another important factor that was a key to our success was that we had the opportunity to meet with the leadership and the main stakeholders of these countries, including — as already indicated by Ambassador Jones Parry — the leaders of two of those countries, President Obasanjo and President Kufuor, and representatives of the Economic Community of West African States, a subregional organization that has been paying a very high level of attention to the need to maintain peace and stability in the region in order to enable its economies to develop. ECOWAS is an organization that was created particularly to deal with economic development, but it has taken peace and stability seriously and is fully engaged with the Council and with the international community to bring about the solutions that are required either to break deadlocks or to provide the right answers to problems whenever they occur.

We will have the opportunity to discuss this, but the report which has been eloquently presented here this afternoon by Ambassador Jones Parry illustrates very well what we did for seven days. Although we spent just one day in each capital, in that one day quite a bit was achieved that may make our Council more effective and even more the key organ responsible for peace and security in a region that very much needs it. The Council is moving in that direction.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation thanks our colleagues, Ambassadors Jones Parry, De La Sablière and Gaspar Martins, for their briefing on the Security Council mission to West Africa. I am sure that the visit was a useful one. This year, unfortunately, my delegation was unable to participate in the mission. Therefore, following the oral briefing, I should like to ask a few specific questions.

With respect to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, did the constitutional Government of the country ask for assistance from the Security Council in settling the conflict with the rebels? If so, what was the nature of the request and how did the mission respond to it?

As to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, what was the mission's impression of the military's preparedness for restraint and not to interfere in the country's constitutional regime? The mission met with the military last year and was assured that the military respected the Constitution, and yet there was a coup d'état a few months later.

In Liberia, following thousands of murders, the mass torture of women, and crimes committed in connection with the recruitment and use of child soldiers, did the mission feel that at least one criminal may be punished in actual fact and not, as we have seen thus far, with mere threats?

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I think that the first thing to say is that there will be a written report available very soon. I think it would be rather good if we had an opportunity to consider that, to have experts look at it, and perhaps to schedule some sort of open discussion on it, which might include the countries of the region. Let us have a transparent debate — I would very much favour that.

The report, when you see it, goes into far greater detail, obviously, than the three of us have sketched out, but it does explain the extent of what we are doing in Côte d'Ivoire. It raises some issues. Of course, what the mission is doing in Côte d'Ivoire is with the full agreement of the Government, and in everything we were talking to the Government about it was all in the best of atmospheres. We were very clear about what we expected, but I detected — especially by the end of the day — a very cooperative response and appreciation of what the United Nations was trying to do and what the Security Council mission actually intended. .

In terms of Guinea-Bissau and the military, I should say that, for those who have sat in briefings with the military in other countries, it was a salutary experience. We were in a fairly large room with lots of strip lighting, only one of which worked. It was near darkness. We had, I think, 12 military officers and the chief of the defence staff of Guinea-Bissau, and by agreement with the mission, I did a 10-minute presentation on the importance of political control of the military and the importance of restructuring, and discussed aspects which all our military face in terms of adaptation to tomorrow's challenges. In a very frank response, the chief of the defence staff explained why there was a coup and made it clear that it was the last thing they wished, but that they had got to the point where, in their view, the interests of the country were being put at risk.

What is significant about that coup is that the Economic Community of West African States was on the ground within 24 hours and that, within another 24 hours, a path for the restoration of civilian control had

been established. We did not get the impression, I think, that this was a military that wanted to hang on to power. Quite the opposite, there is a new Government after elections and all that has happened in the space of nine months. Thus, I think we came away believing in the commitment to political control. I do not think we were necessarily convinced that the steps that need to be taken on restructuring are actually going to be easy or rapid, but certainly we set out what we thought was necessary.

Child soldiers were a theme throughout and, certainly in the case of Liberia, we hammered this consistently. Thus, we addressed the horizontal themes, as I said at the beginning, as best we could. That does not mean that, on each of them, we got full satisfaction in every place — of course not — but we did register our total opposition to what had taken place, our wish especially that the people who recruit child soldiers be prosecuted, and our belief that the problems of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for child soldiers are particularly acute. Again, we recognized in the case of Liberia that some 300 children had been reintegrated into schools and with their families as a result of the United Nations effort, but child soldiers are one of the abominations of West Africa and it will require a substantial effort to tackle them.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all the members of the Security Council mission, which was very ably led by Ambassador Jones Parry, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibility on behalf of the Council.

Let me say a few words before we finally end this meeting, as the Philippines ends its presidency today for the month of June. I would say that June has been a hectic, albeit undoubtedly historic month for the Security Council. June is historically a significant month, with events taking place which shape nations all over the world. We have, over the past month, reached important milestones, for which the Security Council can be proud.

Also, today we have reached the plateau of the five thousandth meeting of the Security Council, on a topic that deserves great attention from the international community: West Africa. This milestone proves that the Security Council has been an effective instrument for the preservation of international peace and security over more than five decades of work.

On behalf of my team, I would like to thank all delegations for their cooperation and for their support of the Philippine presidency. We have enjoyed their camaraderie and friendship. Despite some difficulties and some differences among us, we have recognized and appreciated one common thread among all of us, and that is that all delegations have the singular goal of making the Security Council work. That predisposition by everyone is refreshing and enriching and is the key to making the Council effective.

I would also like to express my profoundest gratitude to the members of the highly motivated and energetic team of the Security Council Secretariat Branch. We thank them for their boundless understanding and patience. They are the oil that has lubricated the smooth running of the Philippine presidency. Our thanks also go to our interpreters for their patience in navigating between the rhyme and the reason of our interventions, and to our verbatim reporters for their skill in separating what is chaff from what is grain.

Finally, I cannot end without relating a tale, taking up the theme of Sir Emyr's cockroaches. It may be of some relevance in the Council. This is the story of a precocious boy and his love of experiments. One day the boy decided to perform an experiment. He got the biggest and most robust frog, which he had determined to be capable of leaping the farthest. First, the boy cut off one front leg and then instructed the frog to jump. It did. Next, he cut off the second front leg. Again, he ordered the frog to leap, and it did. Then he cut off one of the hind legs. He forthwith commanded the frog to jump. The frog stumbled a bit, but it was still able to make a short leap. Finally, the boy severed the second hind leg. This time, when the boy shouted at the frog to jump, it refused to leap in any way. The boy even repeated the command several times. Not even a feeble attempt to jump was elicited. The young boy concluded that when you cut off the four legs of a frog, it loses its sense of hearing. That has threatened us in the Council.

I wish Ambassador Motoc and the Romanian delegation all the best as they assume the presidency tomorrow.

There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.